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CAETANI'S ANNALS OF ISLĀM.

Annali dell' Islām, compilati da LEONE CAETANI, Principe di Teano, vol. I. Introduzione, dall' anno 1 al 6 H. (4to. Hoepli, Milan, 1905. xvi and 740 pp.)

IN spite of the splendid array of modern works on the history of Islām, its unsolved problems are still numerous. It was impossible for individual scholars who tackled the subject to do much more than publish the results of their studies in somewhat condensed form with references to their sources. The above-mentioned work departs from this procedure inasmuch as it forms a repertorium, not only of the sources but also of the latest researches in this field. The reader is also given the material from which the historical conclusions are to be drawn. The great difficulty in eliciting the true facts which accompanied the birth of Islām and controlled its first steps, lies in the fact that the whole of the material at the disposal of the student was handed down by Moslim authors and collectors, and has therefore a strong theological colouring. Legends and traditions were invented, not only to fill up the lacunae of history, but also to render the biography of the founder of Islām miraculous and superhuman. This is all the more unfortunate as the early history of Islām is inseparably connected with an important chapter of Jewish history. No Jewish records of the happenings of this period in the Arabic peninsula exist, except in a few poems. But even these, handed down through many generations by word of mouth, were finally preserved by Moslim littérateurs, who took care to strip them of nearly every national sentiment. It is a generally accepted fact that the North Arabian Jews in pre-Islamic times had become Arabs in aught but religion. That this denationalization was not quite so complete as appears on the surface, may perhaps be inferred from the mutilated poem printed in the earlier part of this number.

In his introduction, which fills nearly half of the present volume, the author gives an admirable survey of the history of Arabia prior to Mohammed, a history in which fact and fiction are indissolubly mixed up. Strange to say, he entirely omits to mention the Jews of the pre-Mohammedan epoch. A true comprehension of the rise of Islām is however impossible, without taking into account the existence of the Jews throughout the Ḥijāz. They, and, in a smaller measure, the few Arab tribes which had adopted Christianity, were responsible for the gradual weakening of paganism in the peninsula. In contra-

distinction to the Arabian Jews, the spiritual life of the Christian Arabs has left no trace whatsoever, and their influence on their countrymen seems to have been nil. The author's description of the relations between Mohammed and the Medinian Jews after the Hijra is not free from some misapprehensions, although it must be admitted that a true appreciation of the actual state of things is beset with difficulties. It cannot, indeed, be denied that their conduct was distinguished neither by political foresight nor unity of action, but as they could not submit to Islām, and would not compromise, their fate was sealed. To charge them with slander is unjustified, and if any one is to be blamed for bad faith, it is not they, but Mohammed.

Prince Caetani's work is quite a literary event. When all the twelve volumes he has promised are completed, the world will possess a work of reference invaluable for students of comparative history of religions. The author's intimate acquaintance with the literature involved, as well as of many works which only indirectly bear on the subject, enabled him to treat his subject with thoroughness. The splendid get-up and the large and clear print greatly enhance the pleasure of studying this fine book.

H. HIRSCHFELD.